

XII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Announcements, &c.*

WE have received the following letters :—

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

5 Peel Terrace, Brighton, Nov. 16th, 1861.

SIR,—November might be called the Ornithologist's month, at least on the South Coast; in it nearly all the rare birds have been found which have come under my observation.

On Friday (15th) two fine specimens of the Shore-Lark (*Alauda alpestris*) were taken by a bird-catcher at Rottingdean, near Brighton, in clap-nets. The decoy birds used were common larks (*A. arvensis*), for which he first mistook these rare Northern wanderers. I saw the man who caught them; he said there were five, and on the following morning in the same place he took a third; therefore two more remain to be accounted for on some other part of the coast. I suppose these arrivals had something to cause them of an unusual kind, perhaps the late severe gales, though all three birds were very fat and healthy, with no appearance of privation. The two first were cocks in good plumage, strong, had crests particularly fine, and showed the elongated feathers (black, and pointed over the eye) well developed. I had them all out and examined them minutely, during which they pecked my fingers to the best of their ability. The black tail-feathers were rich, but the gorget (rather narrow when the bird looks down) not what I expected to find from the various plates I consulted; it is more seen, however, when the head is held back.

I have never had the good fortune on any previous occasion to handle three living British examples of the Shore-Lark at one time. Two of them have been placed by Mr. Swaysland, Queen's Road, Brighton, in his aviary, and may there be seen; the third he proposes to stuff. I shall avail myself of the opportunity to observe the habits of *A. alpestris*. The cry is like a Snow Bunting's, or that of the chick of the domestic fowl; and they keep to the rock placed in the aviary, rather than descend among the shrubs below, seem restless in their habits, and in appearance remind one of the *Emberizinae*. I inspected these birds within a few hours of their capture, and was present when the man

brought the third next day : he was quite ignorant of their value. I can therefore vouch for their authenticity as British specimens.

Two Buntings (*Emberiza nivalis*), very white, and an abnormal specimen of *A. arvensis*, as pure as snow, were caught by another man at Rottingdean the same day as the third Shore-Lark, and were placed in the above-mentioned aviary, together affording a most interesting spectacle. A few *Linota canescens*, Yarr., have been taken this year.

Yours, &c.,

GEO. DAWSON ROWLEY.

P.S. Nov. 20th.—I trouble you again to say that the finest specimen of the three Shore-Larks has a good broad gorget ; therefore my remarks on that point apply only to the other two. They are all male birds ; and the one stuffed has passed into the collection of Henry Collins, Esq., of Aldsworth, near Portsmouth.

In the aviary they sometimes dig for their food, which I *believe* the Pipits never do, though I cannot speak from actual observation.

To the Editor of 'The Ibis.'

Norwich, Dec. 7th, 1861.

SIR,—Should you consider the occurrence of a Scops Eared Owl (*Strix scops*) in Norfolk worth recording in 'The Ibis,' I have much pleasure in sending you the following particulars.

On the 27th of November an adult male of this pretty little Owl was picked up dead near the Lighthouse at Cromer, against which it had in all probability flown with great force, attracted by the glare of the lamps. The head was uninjured and the plumage perfect, but the flesh on the breast and the point of one wing showed symptoms of having sustained a very severe blow.

The stomach was found to contain a mass of fur about the size of a walnut, amongst which was discernible an almost entire skeleton of a mouse, together with the heads and forceps of several earwigs, and three stout caterpillars nearly an inch in length. This rare species has occurred previously in this country in three or four authentic instances, but not of late years. The present example is now in the possession of J. H. Gurney, Esq.,

M.P., of Catton Hall, and forms a most interesting addition to his fine collection of Norfolk rarities.

Yours, &c., H. STEVENSON.

In reference to some remarks in our notice of 'Gatherings of a Naturalist in Australasia' ('Ibis,' vol. iii. p. 197), Dr. Bennett writes to us from Sydney (Aug. 20, 1861) as follows:—

"You mention in the review (in 'The Ibis') of my 'Gatherings,' that the diagram of the Albatros is not explained. In this I agree with you, and send you the following explanation. The diagram forms the segment of a circle:—N. is the direction from which the wind is supposed to be blowing; C. is a ship sailing within six points of the wind; B. is the course of a cutter which can sail, 'close-hauled,' to within four and a half points of the wind; A. is the course of the Albatros, which flies so close to the wind as to keep to within two points of the wind, and appears almost to fly against it."

Dr. Bennett also states that he has great hopes of being able to procure living specimens of the Kagu (*Rhinocetus jubatus**) of New Caledonia for the Zoological Society of London, of whose Menagerie he has already been so distinguished a benefactor.

Mr. T. C. Jerdon, so well known for his writings on Indian Natural History, has in an advanced state of preparation a work on the Natural History of the Vertebrated Animals of that country. It will contain characters of all the classes, orders, families, and genera, and descriptions of all the species of Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, and Fishes found in India.

The geographic limits of the animals described in this work will be:—on the north, the watershed of the Himalayas; thence, on the east, from Teesta River to its junction with the Bramapootra, and down that river to the Bay of Bengal; on the west, from the Indus, where it breaks through the Himalayas, to Kurrachee; and on the south, Cape Comorin.

The object of this work being to enable naturalists and travellers to identify such objects of natural history as they may

* Cf. Ibis. 1861, p. 136.

meet with, the descriptions, though ample for discrimination, will not in general be too minute. An account of the habits and manners of the different animals described will be given as far as is known; and on this head the author's own experience and residence in various parts of the country, from Darjeeling to Trichinopoly, will enable him to give much new information, more especially as regards their geographical distribution.

The greater part of the work is written; and the two volumes relating to the Birds are, we are informed, almost ready for the press. We need hardly say that we look forward to the appearance of this work, which has been so long and so earnestly demanded, with great anxiety.

Mr. Blyth writes to us in August last, referring to his expedition to the Tenasserim Provinces:—"I several times noticed *Pitta (Hydrornis) cyanura* in the jungle-clad hills of Maulmein and Martaban. In the Taony River I had a good opportunity of watching, through a glass, a solitary *Podica personata*. In the southern provinces the Malayan Tapir occurs, with *Argus giganteus*, *Euplocomus vieilloti*, *Francolinus perlatus*, &c."

Since then, having been seriously ill, Mr. Blyth has again returned to Maulmein, to recruit his health by another sea trip. He says (Calcutta, Sept. 29th):—"I am again off to Burmah on the 2nd, on three months' leave of absence; whereby you will perceive that I am convalescent, though still incapable of much exertion. I have been well enough to attend at the Museum regularly for the last week. Dr. Jerdon is still at work there, and I have been looking over various groups of birds with him. For instance, yesterday that of the Bulbuls—a distinct and isolated family, in our opinion, in species of which we are rich. Without going much into details, we have settled that my *Setornis criniger* is a diminutive species of that group of *Criniger* to which *flavirostris*, *gularis*, and *ruficaudatus* belong; also, that *Spizixos* must be included in the major group, *Phyllornis* and *Iora* together constituting a subordinate one or subfamily. By the way, *Basilornis* has not a little the look of *Spizixos*, but pertains to a different family, the former having a distinct subterminal notch to each mandible.

Now for a few comments on 'The Ibis.' But first, while I think

of it, *Emberiza personata* of Swinhoe (*melanops*, nobis), according to Bonaparte's *Conspectus*, should rather be the species following *E. personata* in that work, i. e. *E. spodocephala*, Pallas. —'Ibis,' 1861, p. 225, *Falco sacer*. May not the specimen assigned to Nepal have been a trained bird, brought across the Himalaya? —P. 226, *Milvus affinis*. I doubt this being Indian. —P. 240, Knot: 'seen near Cawnpore.' Once only obtained by Jerdon, and once by myself. —P. 245, *Herodias melanopus*. We have it from Mergui. For 'breast' read 'nape.' —P. 246. By *Lurus ridibundus*, *L. brunneicephalus* is probably meant, *L. ridibundus* being here much more rare. *L. minutus* is new to the Indian fauna. Ditto *Anser minutus*. *Graculus pygmæus* should be *G. javanicus*. —P. 253, *Milvus govinda*. I think *M. melanotis* is distinct. —P. 259. *Cuculus striatus* cannot be this species, as the note is said to resemble that of *C. canorus*. —P. 263. *Phal. filamentosus* is probably the species which I have hitherto termed *sinensis*. —Errata: p. 269, l. 23, for 'greater' read 'gaunt'; line 27, for 'being only' read 'the lungs only of.' —Several of Mr. Newton's birds from Mauritius (p. 271 *et seq.*) were introduced there by the French along with the *Cervus rusa* of Java and the *Lepus nigricollis* of S. India and Ceylon (probably also introduced into Java, where it is called *L. melanauchen*, Temm.), e. g. *Acridotheres tristis*, *Estrela astrild*, *Geopelia striata*, *Francolinus madagascariensis* (qu. *Fr. sinensis*, which we have as the 'Pintado Partridge' from the Mauritius), *P. ponticerianus*, and *Synæcus sinensis*. —P. 279. What is *Turdus pelodes*? A bird sent me by Swinhoe as *T. cardis* ♀ equals my *T. dissimilis*, which I once thought was the male of *T. unicolor*. What is Hodgson's *T. naumanni*? Once only obtained, I think; as *T. pilaris* once was at Saharunpur. *T. iliacus* visits Kohat in large flocks. —P. 297. The Scandinavian *Orites caudatus* is fully as different from that of Britain, &c., as *Sitta europæa* (v. *uralensis*) from *S. cæsia*; but how about the Himalayan *S. cinnamomeiventris*? As for the union of the Crossbills, there is an enormous difference between *Loxia pytiopsittacus* and the diminutive *L. himalayana*, *L. curvirostra* being intermediate. *Circus pallidus* is nearer to *C. cyaneus* than to *C. cineraceus*. —P. 259, *Columba leucozonura*. Is not this *C. rupestris* (Pallas)?

“How many more species of Cassowary shall we have to recognise? Recollect that there is a recently extinct Emeu, *Dromæus ater* (Vieillot), from one of the islands, recognized by Prince Bonaparte, of which a specimen is stated to be extant in the Paris Museum. I have *six* distinct species of Oriole with the black nape, viz. *Orioli acrorhynchus* (Philippines), *chinensis* (China), *macrourus* (Nicobars), *coronatus* (Andamans), *indicus* (chiefly east of the Bay of Bengal), and *tenuirostris* (Burmá). The *O. coronatus* of the Andaman Islands requires to be compared with the Javan bird.”

The following extract is from a letter addressed by Mr. J. J. Monteiro to Dr. A. Günther, dated “Cuio Mines, Province of Benguela, 13° S. L., August 23, 1861:—

“I am now in 13° S. Lat., and my collection of Natural History already boasts of a dozen different species of birds (all different from those I have noticed in other places), a tinful of marine fish, several flat skins, a beautiful specimen of a hedgehog, two live snakes, &c. &c. I have also arranged that freshwater fish from a river and lagoon at about six miles distance from me shall come to my hands for preservation. We have been visited by zebras and a large species of tailed monkey, as well as nightly by hyenas. There are also some curious guinea-piggy looking animals in great numbers in holes and crevices in the rocks (*Hyrae*?).

“The rock of the country is gneiss, except near the sea-shore, where limestone and gypsum rocks occur. The scenery is wild and dull, nothing but bare rocks with scarcely any vegetation (a few spiny and thorny bushes and a few roots of grass), and the whole country is cut in all directions by great ravines, deep, dry, and solitary: only a few springs of perfectly brackish water. The climate is, however, very healthy, and at this season very pleasant—65° Fahr. at night to 75°–80° in the shade by day. Near the beach and in the vicinity of the rivers, the scenery, of course, is more varied and vegetation more luxuriant. Insects are scarce.

“This character continues towards the interior, it is said, for three days’ journey (about fifty to sixty miles), when, towards

the provinces of Quilengues, Caconda, and Bihé, it changes to one of great luxuriance and wonderful abundance of animal life. I say this, of course, from hearsay, as well as from the number of skins, &c., that come from thence.

“I shall shortly leave for Mossamedes (Little Fish Bay), a locality said to be of great interest; and if the fauna partakes of the same character as the flora, it must certainly be very singular. I had *vivâ voce* information of the interior of that place from your countryman, Dr. Welwitsch, who there discovered some extraordinary novelties at a place called ‘Huila,’ where the Portuguese have lately established a colony. I may not very likely have an opportunity of penetrating far inland in my mineralogical explorations, but I expect even in the littoral region to come across interesting specimens. Mr. Sclater will be glad to know that this Province of Benguela is the place *par excellence* for the Finch family, and that I have already some exquisite little things. My Bembe friend, *Pytelia monteiri*, I have never again seen, but hope to introduce some other little beauties to the next London season.”

Mr. Edward Newton has at last been able to accomplish his long-wished-for visit to Madagascar, having been appointed one of the deputation sent from Mauritius to congratulate the new king Radama on his accession. The mission left Port Louis on 22nd Sept. last, and arrived in Tamatave Roads after a good passage of four days. Our correspondent's last letters are dated 12th Oct., but contain no ornithological information. Mr. Newton was then four days' journey from Antananarivo, the residence of the Court of the Hovas.

Writing just after his arrival at Tamatave (27th Sept. 1861), Mr. Newton says, on the passage he saw very little, except some Tropic-birds, and a few Whimbrels, Shearwaters, and Petrels. At the Port he had observed some Crows, a Kite, some *Nectarinæ*, a *Centropus* or *Coua*, and a few Whimbrels and Gulls, but little besides. The party expected to be ten days on their journey up to the capital, to remain there ten days, and take ten days on their return; so that, with the uncertainty of their arriving at Mauritius in time for the December mail, it is probable

that we may not receive further accounts of them or hear of the results accomplished by the mission until February next.

Mr. Wallace's last letters are dated from Batavia, Sept. 20th. After leaving Timor, of which island Mr. Wallace has given us an account in our last Number ('Ibis,' 1861, p. 347 *et seq.*), he proceeded to Bourou, and staid there two months. "From the existence of the Babirusa in this island," says Mr. Wallace, "I had been somewhat doubtful whether its fauna would not prove more *Celebesian* than *Moluccan*. I was soon, however, satisfied that it is a true Moluccan island, though a very poor one. Most of the common Amboyna and Ceram forms occurred, some absolutely identical, others sufficiently modified to be characterized as distinct species. The *Tanygnathus*, *Polychlorus*, *Eclectus*, *Geoffroius*, *Eos*, and *Trichoglossus*, as well as the *Aprosmictus*, occur as in Ceram, the *Tanygnathus* being the only one which varies from the type, wanting the black markings on the wings. *Lorius* is altogether absent, as well as *Corvus*, *Buceros*, and *Cacatua*, genera which are present in every other island from Celebes eastwards. This deficiency does not rest alone on the fact of my not having met with them, though that would be pretty good proof, they being all ubiquitous and noisy birds, but on the universal testimony of the natives, many of whom know all these birds from their visits to other islands, and are quite sure that their own country is destitute of them.

"The Flycatchers (3-4 sp.) seem new, as well as a very common *Mimeta*, near *M. forsteni* of Ceram, and a *Tropidorhynchus*—I suppose the *T. buruensis*, Q. & G., though in Bonaparte's 'Con-spectus' that species is given to Celebes, where I never found the genus. The Pigeons are mostly known species, except a fine *Treron* with very brilliant yellow-marked wings; and I heard of other species of the same group occasionally met with. A single specimen of *Tanysiptera* seems different from the Ceram species; and a *Pitta*, near *P. macklotti* and *P. celebensis*, but sufficiently distinct, is also unique. I was much surprised to find, besides the *Ptilonopus viridis* of Amboyna, the beautiful *P. prasinorrhous*, G. R. Gray, which I had first discovered in Ké, then found in Goram, afterwards in Waigiou, and I think there can

be no doubt it is also found in Ceram ; but birds seem so thinly scattered over that large island, that it would take years to acquire a proper knowledge of its ornithology.

“ At Bouru I shot a *Glareola*—the first time I have met with the genus. I found Coleoptera and grubs in its stomach. Its sternum shows it to be a true Wader, though a most curious and abnormal form.

“ The Cassowary is absent from Bouru, and from every Moluccan island except Ceram ; yet I had been positively assured it was common in Bouru. The error has arisen thus. The people of the little island of Bonoa, at the west end of Ceram, often get young Cassowaries from the main island to bring up. The traders of Cayeli in Bouru buy these, and then take them to Amboyna for sale, often in company with young Babirusas. This happened when I was there. Of course the Amboyna merchants purchasing these animals from Bouru residents, and having no reason for hunting up their pedigree, take it for granted that Cassowaries and Babirusas are found wild in Bouru.”

Mr. Salvin's latest letters are dated from his old quarters at Dueñas in Guatemala, Nov. 4th, and state that, having been there since the 14th of the previous month (in company with Mr. F. Godman), he had obtained about 100 specimens of birds, amongst which were some five or six new to the fauna of Guatemala : “ a Swallow, which may be *Hirundo lunifrons*, *Antrostomus carolinensis*, *Ardea exilis*, a species of *Cardellina* (not *C. rubra*), an *Elainea*, probably new, and a bird something like a *Granatellus*.” In Humming-birds these gentlemen had been pretty successful, having obtained examples of *Selasphorus heloise* and *Delattria henrici*. They had also fallen in with a flock of the rare little Parrot, *Conurus lineolatus*, and obtained three specimens. They intended to stay at Dueñas about three weeks longer, and then make an excursion to Coban ; leaving Guatemala for Costa Rica about the middle or end of January.